

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0302

August 19, 2021

The Honorable Doug Ducey
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Governor Ducey,

I write regarding your recent decision to withhold American Rescue Plan funds from schools choosing to implement science-based, rational, and life-saving mask policies. This shortsighted and politically motivated decision is not only directly contradictory to the Congressional intent for American Rescue Plan Funds – it will also contribute to the spread of COVID-19 in Arizona and will cost lives. You must reverse it immediately.

Unfortunately, this maleficent policy follows a long pattern of your office's failures to adequately respond to this pandemic. Your number one priority should be protecting the lives and health of Arizonans, particularly our children, and yet you consistently refuse or delay implementing policies that could do so. As Congressman Stanton stated in his letter to Secretary Yellen earlier this week, as of the end of July, Arizona has lost more children to COVID-19 than all but one other state, and we continue to see hospitalization rates increase rapidly. A strong leader would do everything in their power to reverse heightening COVID-19 trends, and yet you seem content with putting our children's lives at risk.

As Arizona's only Congressional Representative on the Appropriations Committee, I worked tirelessly to ensure that our state, and your office, received significant federal funding for urgent relief. I worked with my colleagues to ensure every Arizona school would receive the federal support they need to get through the pandemic. This effort was successful, to the great relief of parents and educators in my district and around the state. Now, you have placed these educators in an impossible position – protect their lives and health and those of their students, or risk losing the funding Congress intended them to receive. I am, frankly, not surprised by your disgraceful decision to again undercut our schools, and completely disregard and politicize the advice from our medical professionals, but nonetheless urge you to reconsider.

I have the utmost respect for educators who have adapted to online and hybrid learning throughout the pandemic, and I agree it is time for children to return to the classroom and engage with more consistency. Schools, however, should be afforded the autonomy to determine how to best bring their students back safely. Children under the age of 12 cannot even get a vaccine yet. If a school chooses to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) guidelines on masking and safety, there is no legitimate reason they should be prevented from accessing

federal education funding. Why would you punish our own state's schools for following the health and safety recommendations from our nation's top health and science professionals?

I urge you to reconsider your decision on this matter. It is abhorrent, disgusting, and puts our children at risk. You have the power to reverse this politically motivated decision – use it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ann Kirkpatrick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ann" written in a stylized, abbreviated form.

Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress